

## Devotional and Selections

### THE DIVINE COMPANIONSHIP.

By the Rev. William Vassie, Castleton.

"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."—Matt. 28:20.

These memorable words are among the last recorded utterances of our blessed Lord before he ascended into heaven. And if we would understand this saying aright, if we would feel its infinite power to encourage and strengthen us, we must read it in the light of our Lord's resurrection; we must receive it as the utterance of one who has passed beyond the conditions which hedge in our finite lives, and tie us down to one small spot of earth. For the fact of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ had changed entirely his relation to mankind, and made it possible for him to use the words of our text as literally true to every believer, in all lands and for all time. These words, therefore, declare to all who love him the blessed truth of the companionship of Jesus, of his continual presence with each believer as an individual, for ever and ever.

During his early life, the disciples were at times painfully reminded of the absence of Jesus. The twelve felt it as they toiled in rowing against a stormy sea and contrary wind, while their Master had retired to a neighboring mountain to be alone with God. The sorrowing sisters at Bethany felt it as they watched by their brother's dying bed; and they each separately said to Jesus when he came at last, "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died." How painfully these two sisters must have felt the want of the real presence of Jesus.

All this was inevitable during the earthly life of Jesus of Nazareth. Because he was a man among men, his presence was limited by the laws which govern our own bodies; his companionship was of necessity broken in its character, short in its duration, and extended only to a few, and even to them only in part. The reality of his earthly existence made it impossible for him to say even to the beloved disciple, before his resurrection, "Lo, I am with you alway."

But all this was changed after he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. Then, in the plenitude of his risen and ascended life, he gave the new promise of his eternal presence with all his followers to the end of time. And ever since, believers have felt the truth and the power of this promise. He is present in the quiet sickroom with the weary sufferer and the anxious watcher; in the crowded city; in the loneliness of the country; in the barbarism and wretchedness of heathenism; wherever there is a seeker after him, there Jesus is always found. Though countless thousands are resting joyfully in his felt presence and companionship, telling him their wants and receiving his counsel, that does not in the slightest degree hinder each of us, with our different needs and natures, from realizing to the full the joy of his presence, the compassionate love which fills his heart, and the infinite strength which his blessed companionship imparts to us; for God hath exalted him as a Prince and a Savior, and he, in the consciousness of

his power, and as an evidence of his glorious reign in heavenly places, gave this promise to the members of his Church for all time—"Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world."

One of the effects of the companionship of Jesus with each believer is that it makes him rise superior to all the changes and chances of this earthly life. Perhaps every one dreads some special kind of change more than another, and it is inevitable that changes must come to us all. But this Divine companionship is the only power that will lift us above them, and crown our lives with victory in the presence of God.

Another effect of this Divine companionship is that it saves us from all evil companionships, and from their degrading results. The moral twist in our nature, and the natural depravity of our hearts, seem to incline us more readily to the evil than to the good. But if we once realize that these words of Jesus are addressed to each of us as individuals, we shall find it impossible to grieve his gentle spirit by going in the way of sinners; their sinful conversation and wicked doings will be distasteful to us, because in communion with Jesus we are breathing the very air of heaven, and finding out that even here, in his presence, there is fulness of joy.

Again, this Divine companionship of Jesus prepares us for the eternal fellowship above, and is our sure support in the last supreme moment of our earthly existence. Look at the companionship of Jesus in this light. Remember how the infirmities of our bodies, the cares and troubles of life, and the weakness of our spiritual nature, all conspire to interrupt that companionship, and to diminish our consciousness of his presence. Yet to that companionship we owe all the pure and lasting joy we possess, all our strength to resist sin, all our power to continue in any good work, all our ability to manifest the fruits of the Spirit and to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. Nay, to his presence in our hearts we owe our share in the benefits of his redeeming work, and our right to a place in the Father's home above.

This life of ours is but a fragment of eternity, and it is there, and not here, that we must look for the complete fulfilment of this promise of Jesus. Though given in Time, and partly fulfilled in Time, it can only be fully realized in Eternity. And seeing that now it fills us with unspeakable joy, and is indeed the very breath by which we live, what will it be in Eternity? When he who upholds us now by his continual presence and sympathy, who says in all trial, danger, distress, and even in the hour of death, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee"—when he gives us the realization of his divine companionship, when, with all the nations of the redeemed, we follow him whithersoever he goeth, what will the blessing be then?—The Church of Scotland Magazine.

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True friends visit us in prosperity, but in adversity they come without invitation.

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One of the great dangers of the spiritual life is mental vagueness, and one of the great dangers of the mental life is spiritual apathy.